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AUTHOR Harris, Mary M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes Project Launch, a beginning teacher induction program that combines individual mentoring with large group meetings that address participants' concerns. Planned by a committee of local teachers, administrators, and teacher educators, Project Launch has operated since 1996-97. Unique features include extensive interinstitutional collaboration associated with planning and delivery and incorporation of locally adopted standards to organize understandings of teaching. To participate, teachers must be starting their first full-time teaching contract. Principals assign mentors within the same building for each new teacher. Mentors commit to working with new teachers at least once a week. Activities are organized around action plans formulated in September. Four day-long sessions help build professional community, guide formation of goals, emphasize participants' roles as mentors and teachers, and provide resources. In May, participants share stories of growth directed toward action goals. Project evaluation suggests that effects on teacher retention become apparent as participants move into years 3-5 of teaching. Over the years, perceptions of areas of comfort and discomfort for new teachers have been very similar. Most teachers choose as one of their three action goals an item related to professional development (followed by relationships and learning environment). (Contains 16 references.) (SM)

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Learning from New Teachers: Project Launch in Broad Strokes

Mary M. Harris

Meadows Chair for Excellence in Education

University of North Texas

P.O. Box 311337

Denton, TX 76203-1337

Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Dallas, TX, March 3, 2001.

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Project Launch in Broad Strokes

Growth in the population of young children, the impending retirement of teachers recruited in the post-Sputnik era, and the large numbers of teachers who leave the profession soon after initial preparation are contributors to a growing national teacher shortage. Of these factors, only the third falls within the domain of teacher educators, who have responded by collaborating with school districts, state departments of education, and other entities in the design and implementation of support programs for beginning teachers. By promoting early success and satisfaction with teaching, such programs may stem the tide of early attrition from teaching and reduce teacher migration to other schools, districts, or regions of the country (Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay&Edelfelt, 1989; Husling-Austin, 1990; Gold, 1996; Scherer, 1999; Fideler& Haselkorn, 2000). In 1996, teacher educators affiliated with the North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education joined the Bismarck Mandan Area Teacher Center in development of Project Launch, an induction program that combines individual mentoring of new teachers with large group meetings designed to address concerns of participants. Unique features of Project Launch included the extent of the inter-institutional collaboration associated with its planning and delivery, and incorporation of locally adopted standards to organize understandings of teaching.

Demographics and Description of Project Launch

The Bismarck Mandan Area Teacher Center, one of ten regional teacher centers in North Dakota, serves a 13-county area that includes a city school district serving more than 10,000 students, two towns with school districts serving 1,000-4,000 students, one of which is adjacent to the large district, numerous rural school districts, and several Bureau of Indian Affairs schools located on and off a reservation. The variety of the school populations served was one factors

attracting the North Dakota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education to the Bismarck Mandan Area Teacher Center as a partner for a program of support for recent graduates proposed for funding through North Dakota Goals 2000. Planned by a committee of local teachers, administrators, and teacher educators, Project Launch was begun in 1996-97 and has continued in successive years.

During its first five years, 135 first year teachers have been involved in Project Launch. To be eligible for participation, teachers must have been starting their first full-time teaching contract in an assignment that involved work with groups of students (excluding some counselors and therapists). Teachers are recruited through district and campus administrators, who agree to designate a mentor teacher for each new teacher participant and to release each pair of teachers for four days of professional development, typically scheduled in September, November, January, and May. Over the five years, participants have been recruited from 12 public school districts, a county system of rural schools, and from 4 other schools as indicated in Figure 1. Two of these are public (one operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and one as part of a juvenile correctional facility), one is religious, and one is a private school for children with severe disabilities. More than half of the participants (54.8%) have come from one large school district and have included, over time, teachers from each of its elementary, middle, and high school campuses. Eight participants (5.9%) have come from schools that serve predominantly American Indian students. The remainder have come from school districts serving between 35 and 3,700 students (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1999). Twenty-one of the new teacher participants (15.5%) graduated from out-of-state institutions. Half of the 84.5% graduating from institutions in North Dakota attended a private university, the only institution of higher education in the service area of the Bismarck Mandan Area Teacher Center. The others

were public university graduates. Institutions of graduation of participants are shown in Figure 2.

Schools and school districts sponsoring new teachers in Project Launch agree that principals will assign a mentor for each new teacher as early as possible. The mentor should teach in the same building and at a grade level as close as possible to that of the new teacher and should want to accept this assignment. For specialists, mentors have often been teachers of the same specialty working in a different building. Although participants regularly express the wish that the first Project Launch meeting could occur before the start of school, the variety of school starting dates and the late hiring of some teachers make this impossible. Instead, the project director provides orientation packets for each new and mentor teacher and is available to orient school teams, especially in schools new to the project. Orientation packets have become more elaborate over the course of the project. In 2000-2001 the packets included, for mentors, articles on mentoring by Bowers and Eberhart (1990) and Applegate, Flora, and Lasley (1980). New teacher resources handed out before school included The New Elementary Teacher's Handbook (Jonson, 1997), Secrets for Secondary School Teachers (Kottler, Kottler, & Kottler, 1998), and The First Days of School (Wong & Wong, 1998).

Mentors commit to meet with new teacher partners at least once a week. This works out best when the pair selects a regular meeting time and stays with it, although some pairs switch to longer monthly meetings and others meet every day, due to the nature of their teaching assignments and their own preferences. Activities of the teacher partners are organized around action plans formulated at the September meeting. Before they develop action plans, participants are exposed to the Project Launch Framework for Teaching, attached as Appendix A. The Framework is based on the INTASC Standards (1992) and serves as a locally articulated

definition of teaching for Project Launch. In 2000, the Framework was refined through development of the set of rubrics similar in format to those developed by Danielson (1996) that appear in Appendix B. Pairs of new and mentor teachers discuss areas for growth in teaching to which they aspire. Each mentor/mentee pair then formulates three goals for growth in teaching to which they aspire for the new teacher and identifies actions they will take to achieve their goals as the year continues. At the May meeting, participants orally share stories of growth directed toward action goals. They submit time logs and responses to questions designed to elicit perceptions of growth in areas related to Goals 2000. Teachers enrolled for university credit also submit brief papers describing progress in meeting action plan goals. Project Launch mentor teachers are not paid. Substitute and travel expenses for all participants are paid by the grant.

The four daylong Project Launch sessions serve several purposes. First, they provide structure for the interaction of pairs of teachers by guiding formation and implementation of goals. Second, they build professional community by focusing attention on common concerns such as maintaining a positive attitude, interacting with parents and the community, applying technology in teaching, and recognizing the strengths of students. Third, the sessions help participants to focus on their roles in Project Launch as mentors and new teachers. Both roles are discussed with all participants, but people in them also meet separately to explore their role-related experiences in more depth. Finally, the sessions provide resources that address current concerns of participants. Because concerns of participants vary, two or three choices of topics, such as classroom management, regular and special educator collaboration, and dealing with challenging students, are usually offered. A popular format for consideration of teaching issues is discussion of brief cases written by the participants or selected from the literature. Other formats used in Project Launch meetings include lecture, presentations by panels of past participants,

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round-table discussion, role-alike discussion, and sharing by dyads and other small groups. Leadership for the sessions is shared, with attention to feedback collected from participants at every session.

Retention and Action Focus of Project Launch Participants

Evaluation of Project Launch has attended to its possible effect on new teacher retention and to the conceptions of teaching of new teacher participants as represented by their self assessments, and those of their mentors, using the Project Launch Framework for Teaching, and by their choices of goals for Action Plans as related to the Project Launch Framework. Although analysis of data in this areas is always still in progress, we do have some findings in each area based on data collected in the first four years of Project Launch.

Teacher Retention. Study of the 106 Project Launch participants whose status after each full year of teaching is known suggests that any positive effect of Project Launch on teacher retention becomes apparent, not during or immediately after the first year, but as participants moved into their third, fourth, and fifth years of teaching. For Project Launch participants who have completed more than two, three, or four years of teaching, attrition is lower than the national averages, and significantly lower after the second year of teaching. Also, the supposed trend toward teacher movement from smaller to larger school districts has not been apparent for Project Launch teachers after the first year of teaching (Harris & Ritter, 2001).

New Teacher Self Assessment. One tool for perceiving the understandings of teaching of Project Launch participants has been asking new teachers at the final session in May to select from the Project Launch Framework for Teaching the five areas in which they were most comfortable with their performance in the first year and the five in which they were least comfortable. Mentor teachers have been asked to do the same with respect to their partner new

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teachers. Over time, the data have been remarkably similar from year to year, and areas of comparative comfort and discomfort have been perceived with remarkable similarity by new teachers and their mentors.

New and mentor teacher perceived areas of greatest comfort for new teachers to be in the area of Framework 4, Individual Differences; Framework 1 Application of Content; Framework 8 Curriculum Planning; Framework 5 Variety of Methods; and Framework 6 Learning Environment. .Only minor variation in the ordering of these items by new and mentor teachers occurred from year to year. Areas of least comfort for the new teachers were perceived to be in the areas of Framework 9 Use of Assessment; Framework 7 Classroom Communication, and Framework 3 Cultural Competence. Significant differences in the ordering of these items occurred only in Cultural Competence, where mentor teachers were more likely than new teachers to perceive this as an area of concern(Jonas,1998). In accounting for this difference, it seems that cultural competence was considered most important by teachers in schools that served predominantly American Indian populations. A majority of the new teachers in these schools were not American Indian. Although these new teachers were often quite concerned about gaining cultural competence, it seems that its lack was perceived as a greater barrier to success by their mentors than by themselves at the end of the first year.

Patterns in Action Plan Goals. Another area for on-going study has been the goals selected annually for action during the year by Project Launch participants. Goals developed by 104 participants in the first four years of Project Launch were classified according to the Project Launch Framework for Teaching. Analysis of these goals is leading to interesting perceptions of areas of concern for new teachers and their mentors.

In the first analysis of the action plan data, it appeared that 68.2 percent of the teachers chose as one of their three action goals an item related to Framework 10 Professional Development, 51.6 percent chose a goal from Framework 11 Relationships, and 38.5 percent chose a goal related to Framework 6 Learning Environment. Closer examination of these goals led to new ways of thinking about their classification. Many of the teachers who chose a professional development goal, for example, specified a topic to be studied or skill to be acquired. Others referred to a professional development activity such as attending a conference or observing another teacher without linking it to a specified outcome. Still others stated that they wished to fulfill the minimum requirements of Project Launch. A fourth group of professional development goals was quite general, expressing desire to be successful in the first year of teaching, for example. These sub-categories seemed different enough that each was considered separately. Framework 11 Relationships was also subdivided. One category was for teachers who chose action goals that involved building relationships with parents. Another was for those whose goal involved building relationships with colleagues other than the mentor. A third category was reserved for goals that seemed that more survival than community oriented—to learn the "unwritten rules in this school," for example. In setting action goals, few teachers specified plans that involved Framework 7 Classroom Communication.. Goals in this area were combined with those in Framework 1, which was also concerned with the thoughtful design of learning experiences.

Table 1 shows the percentages of Project Launch participants who selected goals in each category in Column 4. Other columns show show goal choices by percentages of teachers in the urban and adjacent school districts, the rural schools and districts, and the schools that serve predominantly American Indian students. Some goal rankings by type of school varied

significantly. Urban teachers are most likely to be concerned about performance in the areas of Application of Content, Learning Environment, and achievement of a Professional Development Goal. Rural teachers selected goals in the areas of Relating to Colleagues, Learning Environment, and Curriculum Planning. Teachers in schools that served predominantly American Indian students selected goals in the areas of Cultural Competence and other areas that tied for second place: Individual Differences, Variety of Methods, Learning Environment, achieving Professional Development Goals, and pursuing a Professional Development Strategy. Differences in goal selections according to type of school were striking and significant, with urban teachers more focused on the teaching of content, rural teachers on relating to colleagues, and teachers of American Indian students focused on cultural competence and addressing individual learning needs. No matter what their setting, beginning teachers were concerned with creating a learning environment where students were motivated, involved, and accepting of responsibility.

Our study of the goals selected by teachers for action as related to assessments of their performance and retention is only beginning. As a starting point for this process, however, we decided to focus on small groups of teachers in disciplines that are especially vulnerable to attrition in North Dakota (Harris, 1991). The papers of my two colleagues examine special educators and teachers of the arts whom we came to know through Project Launch.

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Figure 1
Project Launch Participants by School and School District

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Beulah High School			1	1	
Bismarck Public Schools					
Bismarck High School	1	1	1	2	
Centennial Elementary School			1		1
Century High School	1	2	3	1	3
Hughes Middle School	2	3			
Manchester House				1	
Manning Elementary School	1				
Murphy Elementary School			1		
Moses Elementary School	1				
Myhre Elementary School	1	3	1	1	
Northridge Elementary School			1	2	
Pioneer Elementary School				1	
Prairie Rose Elementary School	1				
Richholt Elementary School		1	1		
Riverside Elementary School		1	1		
Roosevelt Elementary School		1	1		
Saxvik Elementary School	1		1		1
Simle Middle School	4	2	2	3	2
Solheim Elementary School	3	3			1
Wachter Middle School	2			1	1
Will Moore Elementary School			1		4
Carson School					2
Driscoll Public School	1	2	2	1	
Flasher Public School	1	3	1	1	2
Glen Ullin Public School		1			
Hazelton-Moffit Public School		1			
Jamerson Elementary School	1				
Mandan Public Schools					
Lewis & Clark Elementary			1		
Mandan High School	4			3	
Mandan Junior High School					1
Mary Stark Elementary				1	
Marmot High School (NDYCC)	1		1		1
Napoleon Public School				3	3
St. Bernard's Mission School	1	1			
Solen/Cannon Ball Public School			2		
Standing Rock Elementary School			2	1	
Sterling Elementary School					1
Tappen Public School			1	2	4
Wishek Public School			3		2
TOTALS	27	25	29	25	29

Figure 2

Project Launch Participants by Institution of Graduation

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Bismarck State College				1	
Concordia College		1	1		
Dickinson State	3		2	4	3
Jamestown College			1		1
Minot State	3	5	1	2	2
Mayville State					1
Moorhead State	1	2	4	1	2
North Dakota State				1	2
Northern State					2
University of Mary	14	13	11	12	7
University of North Dakota	2	2	5	1	4
Valley City State		2	3	3	3
Other (out-of-state)	4		1		2
TOTALS	**27**	**25**	**29**	**25**	**29**

Table 1
Percentages of Urban, Rural, & Reservation Project Launch Participants Selecting Action Plan Goals by Framework Category

Framework		Urban	Rural	Reservation	Total
1 & 7	Application of Content	40.8	24.0	0	33.7
2	Developmental Competence	5.6	12.0	0	6.7
3	Cultural Competence	2.8	4.0	62.5	7.7
4	Individual Differences	16.9	20.0	37.5	19.2
5	Variety of Methods	28.2	16.0	37.5	26.0
6	Learning Environment	39.4	36.0	37.5	38.5
8	Curriculum Planning	29.6	32.0	0	27.9
9	Use of Assessment	9.9	12.0	25.0	11.5
10a	Professional Development Goal	32.4	16.0	37.5	28.8
10b	Professional Development Strategy	12.7	16.0	37.5	15.4
10c	Complete Project Launch	16.9	20.0	0	16.3
10d	Think Like a Teacher	5.6	12.0	12.5	7.7
11a	Relate to Parents	19.7	24.0	12.5	20.2
11b	Relate to Colleagues	23.9	40.0	0	17.0
11c	Survive at School	14.1	16.0	12.5	14.4

Appendix A

FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING: PROJECT LAUNCH

Before developing an action plan, teacher partnerships are asked to consider the framework for teaching endorsed by the project planners. We are committed to a complex vision of teaching and encourage you, in your work together, to seek to develop your teaching in ways that show that new (and experienced) teachers...

1. Understand the content and approach of the subjects taught and design learning experiences which involve students in learning subjects meaningfully.

2. Understand child and/or adolescent development and provide learning experiences which support the intellectual, social, and personal development of students.

3. Use cultural appreciation and understanding to enhance student learning and to foster development of learning communities which include students and their families.

4. Understanding how students differ in their approaches to learning and provide opportunities for learning which are adapted to individual student differences.

5. Understand and use a variety of methods or strategies, which include applications of technology, to encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and demonstration of learning.

6. Use understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages students to interact constructively, to engage actively in learning, and to accept responsibility.

7. Use knowledge of communication techniques to foster inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

8. Plan instruction based on knowledge of the subject, the students, the community, and the goals of the curriculum.

9. Use formal and informal assessment to evaluate student learning.

10. Reflect on their teaching and its effect on students, parents, the school community, and the school district and seek ways to grow professionally.

11. Foster relationships with school colleagues, parents and the school community to support student learning and well-being.

Project Launch

Rubrics to accompany the Project Launch Framework for Teaching

1. The teacher understands the content and approach of the subjects taught, designing learning experiences which involve students in learning subjects meaningfully.

___**Level 1** The teacher makes frequent errors of fact and approach in the presentation of content.

___**Level 2** The teacher's presentation of content is generally accurate, although sometimes incomplete or confused, and is sometimes successfully linked with the students' content knowledge and experience.

___**Level 3** The teacher's presentation of content regularly shows solid content knowledge and ability to design learning experiences which link with the students' content knowledge and experience.

___**Level 4** The teacher's presentation of content shows extensive content knowledge and the ability to design learning experiences which involve students as partners in acquisition of content knowledge.

2. The teacher understands child or adolescent development and provides learning experiences which support the intellectual, social, and personal development of students.

___**Level 1** The teacher shows little understanding of the developmental characteristics of the age group and often offers assignments and activities that are inappropriate and fail to engage students.

___**Level 2** The teacher is generally successful in providing activities and assignments that are developmentally appropriate and engage most of the students in learning.

___**Level 3** The teacher displays thorough understanding of typical developmental characteristics of the age group, and most classroom activities and assignments successfully engage all students, responding to their needs and interests.

___**Level 4** The teacher displays thorough understanding of typical developmental characteristics of the age group and exceptions to the patterns and successfully engages all students in exploration of content through assignments and activities that are geared to their needs, interests, and developmental levels.

3. The teacher uses cultural appreciation and understanding to enhance student learning and to foster development of learning communities which include students and their families.

___**Level 1** The teacher displays limited interest in the interests or cultural heritage of students and appears unresponsive to concerns of families.

___**Level 2** The teacher recognizes the value of understanding student interests and cultural background but displays limited personal knowledge. The teacher meets the requirements of the school for communication with families but has a limited repertoire for response to family concerns.

___**Level 3** The teacher displays knowledge of and appreciation for the interests or cultural heritages of groups of students and develops a classroom learning community which includes students of different cultures and is responsive to the concerns and interests of families.

___**Level 4** The teacher displays knowledge of the interests or cultural heritage of each student, communicates frequently with families about student progress, and handles family concerns with great sensitivity.

4. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and provides opportunities for learning which are adapted to individual differences.

___**Level 1** The teacher blames the student, the family, or the environment when students are not successful in learning.

___**Level 2** The teacher understands the importance of trying to assure the successful learning of every student but displays a limited repertoire of strategies to use.

___**Level 3** The teacher displays understanding of a variety of strategies for responding to students' different approaches to learning and persists in seeking approaches and adaptations for students who have difficulty seeking consultation when appropriate.

___**Level 4** The teacher displays a wide knowledge of strategies appropriate to the different skills and abilities of students, including those who have special needs, and uses an extensive repertoire of approaches to ensure the learning of students who need help, seeking additional resources as appropriate.

5. The teacher understands and uses a variety of methods or strategies, including applications of technology, to encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and demonstration of learning.

___**Level 1** The activities going on in the classroom are monotonous and often do not advance the learning of students.

___**Level 2** The teacher is partially successful in use of instructional strategies or methods that advance student learning appropriate to instructional goals.

___**Level 3** The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies or methods, including applications of technology, which support learning that is important, complex, and addresses to real-life application of instructional goals.

___**Level 4** The teacher uses a variety of strategies or methods, including regular and appropriate applications of educational technology, in designing learning experiences which are coherent and highly relevant to students and to the goals of instruction.

6. The teacher uses understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment which encourages students to interact constructively, to engage actively in learning, and to accept responsibility.

___**Level 1** The teacher is not successful in creating an environment that engages students in learning. Negative attitudes toward learning and/or students are conveyed, and students fail to display pride in their work.

___**Level 2** The teacher is only partially successful in creating or maintaining a classroom environment that effectively supports learning. The classroom environment conveys inconsistent expectations for student behavior, students invest limited energy in the quality of their work, and teacher response to student misbehavior is uneven in its effectiveness.

___**Level 3** The teacher conveys genuine enthusiasm for subject(s) and high expectations for student learning and behavior through the means available (verbal and non-verbal communication, norm-setting, arrangement of space and resources, use of display areas) and responds to student misbehavior, if it occurs, appropriately and in ways that respect the dignity of the student.

___**Level 4** The teacher has created an environment in which students take obvious pride in their work and interact responsibly to maintain a constructive learning environment. Teacher response to misbehavior is effective and sensitive to student needs.

7. The teacher uses knowledge of communication techniques to foster inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

___**Level 1** The teacher is not successful in engaging students or involving students in meaningful discussion or response to higher order questions.

___**Level 2** The teacher is sometimes successful in use of questions and discussion techniques to engage students in genuine interchange of ideas.

___**Level 3** The teacher regularly uses questions and discussion techniques which engage all students in constructive interactions that support higher order learning.

___**Level 4** The teacher regularly engages students in discussion which enables them to assume leadership in constructive interaction that supports higher order learning and includes the voices of all students.

8. The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of the students and community and on the goals of the curriculum, as well as on knowledge of the subject (Framework 1)

___**Level 1** The teacher's lessons are structured chaotically with respect to district and state curriculum goals and fail to address expectations of the community for the learning of students.

___**Level 2** The teacher sometimes shows awareness of district and state curricular goals and of community norms in planning instruction.

___**Level 3** The teacher regularly plans instruction whose structure reflects understanding of the goals of district and state curriculum and high expectations for student learning within the framework of community expectations.

___**Level 4** The teacher regularly plans instruction whose structure allows for different pathways in meeting district and state curriculum goals. The teacher actively addresses and positively influences community expectations for the learning of students.

9. The teacher uses formal and informal assessment to evaluate student learning.

___**Level 1** The teacher's plans for assessment depend on a limited repertoire of methods and often are not connected to the content and approach of the curriculum and instructional program.

___**Level 2** The teacher is sometimes successful in assessing student progress in meeting instructional goals in authentic ways that link to the curriculum and instructional program and in using the results of assessment in planning for the whole class.

___**Level 3** The teacher regularly assesses student progress in meeting instructional goals using a combination of formal and informal tools and uses the results of assessments to plan for individuals and groups of students.

___**Level 4** The teacher involves students in design of an on-going program of assessment that is linked to the curriculum, uses formal and informal tools to measure student progress, and enables students to assist in planning learning tasks.

10. The teacher reflects on his or her teaching and its effect on students and the wider community of parents, the school, and the school district and seeks ways to grow professionally.

___**Level 1** The teacher is unable to assess accurately the effect of his or her teaching on students and is not engaged in professional development activities.

___**Level 2** The teacher has a generally accurate impression of the effect of his or her teaching on students and is involved in convenient opportunities for professional development.

___**Level 3** The teacher makes accurate assessments of the effect of lessons on students and other relevant communities, citing evidence to support this judgment, and seeks out opportunities for professional development to enhance his or her knowledge and teaching skills.

___**Level 4** The teacher makes thoughtful and accurate assessments of the effect of lessons on students and other relevant communities, citing and weighing substantial evidence to support this judgment, and is systematically involved in professional development to enhance his or her knowledge and teaching skills.

11. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and the school community to support student learning and well being.

___**Level 1** The teacher's relationships with colleagues are negative or self-serving. The teacher makes no attempt or inappropriate attempts to communicate with parents or other communities beyond the classroom.

___**Level 2** The teacher maintains cordial relationships with colleagues as required by his or her duties and makes modest attempts to engage parents and other school communities in the instructional program, participating in required school events.

___**Level 3** The teacher maintains supportive and cooperative relationships with colleagues and successfully engages parents and other school communities in the instructional program on a regular basis, volunteering for and making substantial contributions to school events.

___**Level 4** The teacher takes the initiative in development of supportive and cooperative relationships with colleagues, regularly engages parents and other school communities in an instructional program designed to successfully involve students in real-world learning, and makes a substantial contribution to the school through leadership of projects or events.